



New England includes many ecosystems that, by virtue of their ecological value, recreational value, or proximity to large populations, hold a special significance to us. EPA - New England is focusing particular attention and resources on these special places. Working closely with our federal, state and local partners, these community-based initiatives are delivering tangible environmental improvements to these areas.

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Fact Sheet/March 2000

Norwalk River Watershed



What Makes The Norwalk River Watershed Special?

- The watershed comprises 44,000 acres of southwestern Connecticut and Westchester County, NY. It is one of the most densely populated areas in New England and represents many coastal watersheds.
- Surface and ground water resources within the watershed provide drinking water and habitat for many species of fish and wildlife, fishing and swimming.

Why Does The Norwalk River Watershed Need Special Attention?

- The watershed does not always meet state water quality standards, or its designated uses such as fishing and swimming.
- The primary threats to water and habitat quality include polluted runoff, sedimentation, and loss of vegetation along river and stream banks.
- The watershed is a high priority basin for curbing nitrogen pollution, which comes from sewage treatment and urban runoff. The watershed initiative complements nitrogen reduction and habitat restoration strategies already underway to restore the Long Island Sound.

What Are The Long Term Goals?

- To restore water and habitat quality in the Norwalk River watershed so that it supports a healthy, diverse fish population and public swimming.
- To demonstrate that community-based watershed management can be an effective tool for restoring water and habitat quality.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress Has Been Made?

- Formed a 19 member advisory committee, with federal, state, and local government and citizen groups, to implement the "Norwalk River Watershed Action Plan."
- Municipalities have used the "action plan" to guide local land-use regulatory decisions.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and volunteers completed one river bank restoration project.
- Trout Unlimited, Town of Wilton, NRCS, and local contractors, completed several fish habitat and river bank restoration projects.
- EPA/CT DEP provided funds to continue volunteer water quality monitoring by Harborwatch/Riverwatch.

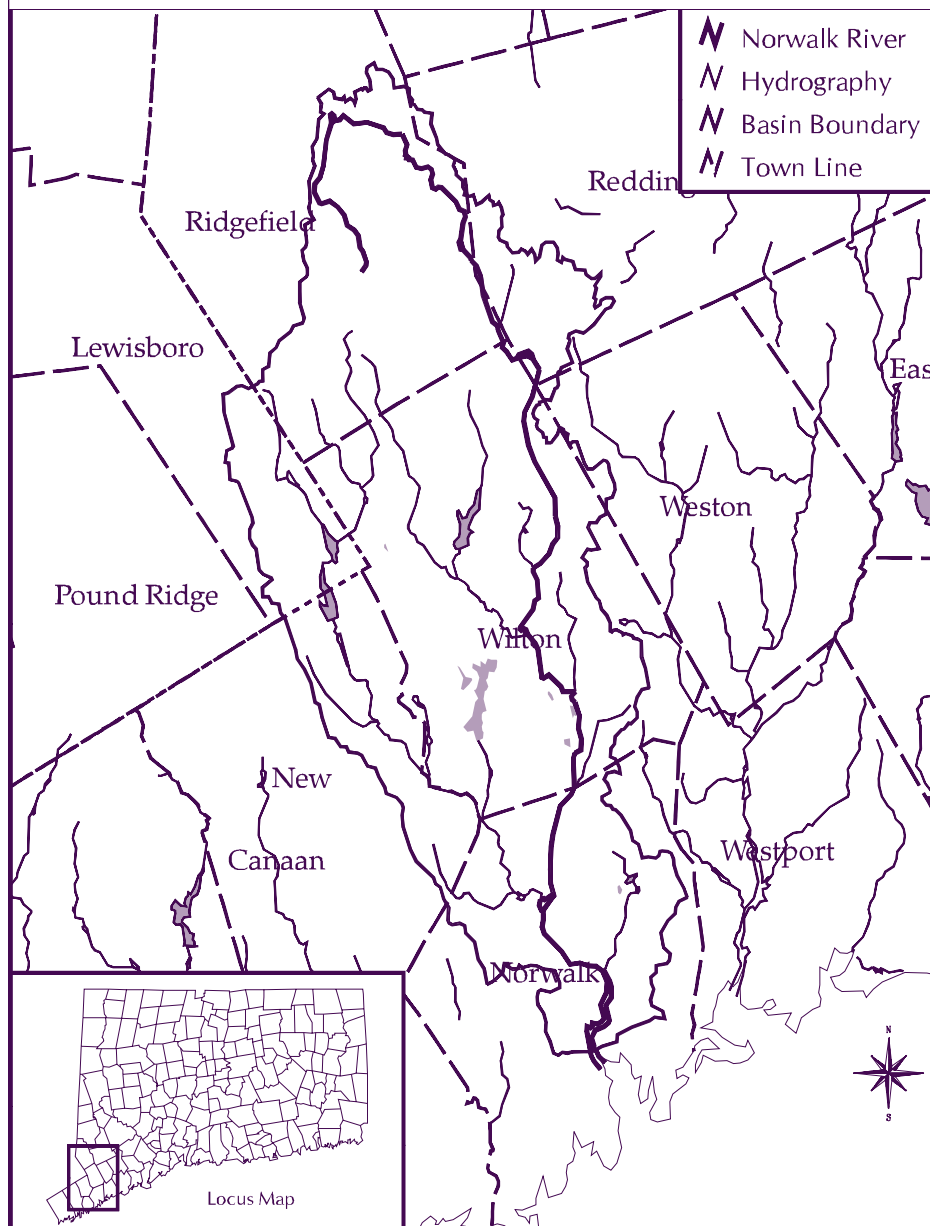
What Major Actions Are Planned For 2000?

- Fairfield County SWCD will work to reduce road sand runoff to the river, using EPA/CT DEP funds.
- The Norwalk River Watershed Assoc. will educate septic system owners on maintenance and work with local health departments to create septic system inspections and maintenance regulations.
- Identify several sites to demonstrate innovative, effective storm water management technologies and practices.
- Complete two riparian habitat restoration demonstration projects utilizing EPA and NRCS funds.
- The UConn. Cooperative Extension System will teach residents to help prevent pollution by altering landscaping and home maintenance practices.

Norwalk River Watershed



Watersheds



Who Are The Partners?

EPA New England • CT Department of Environmental Protection • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service • City of Norwalk, CT • Town of Wilton, CT • Town of Ridgefield, CT • Town of Redding, CT • Town of Weston, CT • Town of New Canaan, CT • Town of Lewisboro, NY • CT Department of Transportation • U.S. Geological Survey • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • University of Connecticut/Cooperative Extension System • Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District • South Western Connecticut Regional Planning Agency • Westchester County Department of Planning • Norwalk River Watershed Association • Save the Sound • Harborwatch/Riverwatch • Trout Unlimited • Norwalk First & Second District Water Companies • Norwalk Maritime Aquarium

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What Is The NRWI?

The Norwalk River Watershed Initiative (NRWI) was launched in 1996 by several Long Island Sound Study partner agencies to demonstrate:

- a watershed approach with a goal of restoring and protecting the water quality, habitat, and other resources of tributaries draining to Long Island Sound;
- a voluntary, collaborative partnership effort among federal, state, regional and local authorities;
- a high degree of public involvement;
- a comprehensive approach to watershed management focusing on the resource needs of the watershed; and
- an emphasis on implementing solutions to priority issues.



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Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.